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purposes due to substitution to have been in the neighborhood of 13 per cent. between 1907 and 1914 alone." Even roofing shingles of wood are taking the downward trend compared with other materials and the tendency is to make the wooden trim of interiors give way to metal and concrete. This change must favor not merely greater safety from fire but favor health, because wood absorbs and holds dampness and microbes.

We should be still more impressed if this exchange of wooden for concrete and hollow-tile homes were accompanied by a better understanding of the capabilities of these materials for beautiful and original work; but architects and home-designers are few and far between who can get it out of their heads that concrete construction is the same as wooden. Of course this is not so. Yet we see costly villas put up which are literal translations of wooden architecture, just productions for wood uttered in concrete. Such architects and designers lose great advantages because they have failed to study the points wherein the concrete house can be made artistically as well as practically superior to the frame building. Concrete can be handled with the utmost ease; at little cost it can follow the most imaginative design. Costly brick-work for chimneys is practically suppressed. Space is given on exterior walls for sculptures in low relief or for mosaics in color; on inner walls for mural paintings, architectural motifs; on floors for tesselated pavements.

We are very slow to take advantage of all these points in practically non-destructible buildings on which decoration can be lavished with a certainty of permanence, perhaps because we cling unconsciously to wood with all its weaknesses and perishability, its liability to leak, its inability to keep out the heat and the cold. We have the wooden house in our ancestry. Half a century has gone by since the advent of "armored concrete" yet only now is a preponderance of safe and sane materials over wood to be recorded and, unable to adjust ourselves to the new stuff, we are timid under the spell of tradition—lame on the art side. The practical superiority of the material has finally forced concrete upon us, but where are the signs that we realize what a chance this material gives for greater beauty in house and home?

SOME RECENT BOOKS

Ancient Times. A History of the Early World. By James Henry Breasted, Ph.D. The attempt to comprise what is known of the past history of mankind in Europe from the first appearance of human beings down to the ruin of the Eastern and Western Roman Empires within a handy little octavo of some 700 pages is an undertaking that requires a very uncommon knowledge of the latest discoveries in Asia, Africa and Europe, as well as the facts and fictions handed down by the historians of Greece and Rome. Materials are so abundant that such a plan might appear impossible except by the use of dates, lists and barren statements too dry to contemplate. The problem was complicated by the necessity of producing a text-book that would meet the requirements of schools, each chapter being followed by a series of "questions" intended to supply a review of the main points of the chapter. This was the task: condensation and thoroughness without loss to the reader and student of freshness of interest.

Fortunately in Dr. Breasted of Chicago University, well-known for certain delightful volumes on ancient Egypt, the person was found to produce what may be termed a model text-book of the sort, in which the curious student can never complain of dryness of style or that impression of lack of proportion which is often made by able and excellent works that deal with kindred subjects. Indeed it is the marshaling of his materials and the reference of them to certain big lines of thought—migrations of races, nations and tribes, distribution of mankind through the centuries and over the continents—that offer one of the most attractive features of the book. The reader is not allowed to forget, because of the complicated facts presented, the larger traits of the whole, viz.: the evolution of the white races that now hold Europe, Africa, America and other parts of the globe. Particularly illuminating is his division of the old habitats of the races and nations of Western Asia into the *grasslands* of the South and the *grasslands* of the North and his reference of the old wars before the Romans to the struggle of tribes and nations to win and hold these favored lands. By such means he gives the reader a set of larger lines on which to range the multiplicity of facts that make up the history of the Oriental past.

On page 271 one reads that the Phœnician alphabet had no vowels but the chart on page 272 includes A, E and O in the list the Greeks received; is not this a mistake? Page 278 the cardinal office of Apollo as *healer-god* is overlooked and the fierce side of Athena pointing to her origin in a demon of the night symbolized by the owl is not brought out. Page 292 the allusion to the use of wigs by the Greeks in imitation of the Egyptians has a reference which fails to refer. Page 408 the gesture of the statue of Apollo with the lizard is taken to be that of a boy throwing a stone at the lizard; but it has been better explained by an arrow or tickling-straw.

The volume is a model of compact information, with plenty of attractions for the eye, to illustrate and fix in memory the facts so far as we know them. Eight color-prints and half a hundred maps, for the most part colored, and several hundred cuts in the text furnish a brave show and help to make a bright text still brighter. Dr. Breasted has not neglected hints as to religions, literatures and arts, enough to whet the curiosity of students and send them to the books that are given in the ample bibliography at the end. He has been helped in the production of this little guide to the Aryan and Semitic past by various scholars to whom he gives his thanks in the preface. (*Boston and New York: Ginn & Company*, $1.60.)

West Point, an Intimate Picture. By Robert Charlwood Richardson, Jr., Captain, 2d Cavalry, U. S. Army. The writer was Assistant Professor of English at West Point and had occasion to renew his acquaintance with his *alma mater*, so that he does not call on reminiscences of cadet days alone to describe the famous military academy from inside and as it exists to-day. With the aid of some three dozen illustrations from photographs